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E 4922
21 APR 1948

Registry Number: E4922/1260/31

FROM

Lord Listowel
No. Colonial Office

Dated: Communicated.

Received in Registry: 21st April

Future of British Subjects in Palestine.

Transmits copy of Minute to the Prime Minister by Lord Listowel dated 16th April, dealing with the future and safety of all British Subjects in Palestine.

Last Paper

4669

References

(Print)

(How disposed of)

(Minutes.)

The S/S agreed to this (see E4606)

E a O Dept. 23/4

Consular Dept. 28/iv

Personnel Dept. Mr Adams 24/iv JB Apr. 21

Miss S

(Action completed) 30/4

(Index) 14/7/49

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34967

Prime Minister

On the 31st March the Defence Committee agreed that all British subjects in Palestine should be warned of the dangers of staying in the country and that, while they could not be forced to leave, they should be strongly advised to do so as quickly as possible and told that if they remained it would be at their own risk. The Colonial Secretary undertook to enquire whether warnings on these lines had already been issued, and, if not, to ensure that they were.

As regards officials of the Palestine Government, their wives and children will all have been evacuated from the country by the end of April and the officials themselves are being evacuated in accordance with a phased programme beforethe 15th of May, with the exception of those who are being seconded for service with the U.N.C. As regards non-officials, the position on the 31st March was that members of the commercial community in Palestine had already been advised that, in making their plans for the future, they should remember that His Majesty's Government could help in their departure to a much greater extent now than later on, when the possibility of practical assistance would steadily diminish. They were advised further that they should send their wives and children to the United Kingdom before the end of April. Missionaries and members of allied institutions were similarly

advised

advised through the Bishop in Jerusalem. The oil companies were also advised that they should arrange for families of their employees in Palestine to leave the country.

The Colonial Secretary therefore telegraphed to the High Commissioner instructing him to issue a warning as desired by the Defence Committee, but suggesting that there might be some members of the British community, e.g. employees of the refineries in Haifa, in whose case advice to leave the country would be inappropriate, at any rate at this stage, and that he must exercise his discretion regarding the issue of a warning to these people. The High Commissioner has replied (a) that he assumes that the warning should be given only to those British subjects whose normal domicile is in the United Kingdom; (b) that if an explicit warning is conveyed to these persons, whether verbally or otherwise, it will not be possible to include those who may be in positions of imperial interest, such as the staff of the Haifa oil refineries. He has suggested that in the case of all such essential persons the warning should be accompanied by an intimation that His Majesty's Government, while in no way minimising the attendant risk, would be glad if they would remain at their posts until the last possible moment in the national interest. It would have to be made clear that in the event of their remaining in response to this request, His Majesty's Government would accept

responsibility

responsibility for the evacuation of the individuals concerned at a later date, should circumstances in Palestine make this necessary, and in the meantime accept responsibility for their security.

As to (a) above the Colonial Secretary agreed that the warning should apply only to those whose normal domicile is not in Palestine. As to (b), in view of the importance of maintaining the operation of the oil Refineries as long as possible, he felt that the warning must be modified in the sense suggested by the High Commissioner. He therefore consulted the Foreign Secretary and the Minister of Defence who have agreed with his view.

I therefore seek your approval of the High Commissioner's proposals. I am sending a copy of this minute, for their information, to the Foreign Secretary, the Minister of Defence and the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations.

INITIALLED. L.

10th April, 1948.